



# Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

## INSIDE

### Dire Dawa Secondary School Dedication

June 24, 2009 — Service members from Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), headquartered in Djibouti, in conjunction with the government of Ethiopia and the U.S. Embassy dedicated the renovated Dire Dawa Secondary School here on Wednesday, June 24. The renovation project includes rehabilitation of the school auditorium and computer classrooms. The refurbishment was funded by CJTF-HOA and

will allow for future Internet and networking capability.

This project allows community members to attend secondary and adult education classes, public forums, and other community and educational programs in a safe and well-built facility.

The strong partnership between the Ethiopian and American people and their governments helped

make this renovation possible.

The service members of CJTF-HOA, headquartered in Djibouti, employ an “indirect approach” to counter extremism. Through a strategy of Cooperative Conflict Prevention, the task force builds security capacity, promotes regional cooperation, and protects coalition interests to prevail against violent extremist activities. ♦

#### AFRICAN ISSUES

The United States and Ghana: A Partnership of Tangible Results (P 3)

World, U.S. Support Sudan Peace Efforts, U.S. Official Says (p 5)

#### PEACE AND SECURITY

Obama Says U.S. Prepared for Any North Korean Threat (P 6)

U.S. Appalled and Outraged by Violence Against Iranian Protesters (P 7)

#### AMERICAN NEWS

First Trial of Guantanamo Detainee Ends with Conviction (P 8)

New York City Festival Showcases Muslim Art and Ideas (P 9)

Giving to Charity Remains at High Level in United States (P 10)

#### HUMAN RIGHT

Sacrifices of Prisoners of Conscience Should Not Be in Vain (P 11)

#### ENVIRONMENT & EDUCATION

Scientists Say Climate Change Could Harm Health (P 12)

Insurance Tool Helps Farmers, Nations Manage Climate Change Risk (P 14)

### President Obama's Visit to Ghana Will Be Historic

By Charles W. Corey  
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama's July 10–11 visit to Accra, Ghana, will be a “historic occasion,” says Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson. He says it recognizes the progress Ghana has made — particularly in the area of democratization — which serves as an exam-



ple to the rest of Africa.

In a June 17 interview with America.gov, Carson commended Ghana for holding “a very successful presidential and parliamentary election in December [2008] and January of this year, which resulted in

President John Atta Mills

(Continued on page 2)

## President Obama's Visit to Ghana Will Be Historic . . .

*(Continued from page 1)*

coming to power. It was the fifth successful democratic transition of power since the end of military rule there, but, more importantly, for all of Africa, [it serves] as an example of the power of democracy. It was the second time that the opposition party defeated the incumbent party, which clearly suggests that democracy has taken deep and strong root in Ghana."

Additionally, Carson said: "Ghana was also the first state in sub-Saharan Africa to gain its independence and ... today is one of the most vibrant economic and politically important countries in West Africa. Ghana has been a strong contributor to regional stability to African peacekeeping missions in West Africa as well as around the world, and it shortly will become a major producer of petroleum," he added.

Ghana is a country that has "achieved a great deal and is setting a path of progress both on the economic and the political side,"

Carson said. "The visit," he explained, "will, in part, acknowledge Ghana's success and progress, and we hope it will be the first of a number of visits by senior officials from the U.S. government to Africa."



*Ghanaian youngsters smile at a community gathering. A major component of the MCC's mission in Ghana is the construction of new schools.*

Carson said that "in recognition of Ghana's success, both in the management of its democracy in country and the management of its economy, it has been recipient of one of the largest Millennium Challenge Account grants given by the United States — an amount in excess of \$500 million, which will help to serve as a further catalyst

to the development of one of Africa's most important countries." The U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which administers the Millennium Challenge Account grants, is a U.S. government corporation designed to work with some

of the poorest countries in the world. It was established in January 2004, based on the principle that aid is most effective when it reinforces good governance, economic freedom and investments in people. The MCC is working to reduce global pov-

erty through the promotion of sustainable economic growth. It is currently active in more than 15 African countries.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*

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## The United States and Ghana: A Partnership of Tangible Results

By Charles Corey  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — The United States has a “partnership of tangible results” with Ghana — a nation that is already well under way in its preparations to welcome President Obama July 10–11 — says Aaron H. Sherinian, a senior official with the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).

In a June 22 interview with America.gov, Sherinian, who just returned from Ghana, said signs already can be spotted throughout the country saying “President Barack Obama Welcome Home,” or “You Are Welcome in Ghana.” African cloth printed with Obama’s image and sporting a welcome greeting in the local languages is also available in local markets, he said.

The MCC is an independent U.S. foreign aid agency, established in 2004. It forms partnerships with some of the world’s poorest countries, but only those committed to good governance, economic freedom and investment in their citizens.

One of the key means of partnership between the United States and Ghana, Sherinian said, is the Millennium Challenge Corporation’s five-year, \$547 million “compact,” which has as its sole purpose the improvement of people’s lives in Ghana.

Sherinian, who is MCC’s managing director of public affairs, said the goal of the MCC is to establish a



*A Ghanaian cabbage farmer stands proudly in front of his crop. Agricultural development represents both one of the greatest accomplishments and a remaining challenge for the MCC in this key partner country.*

partnership between the people of the United States and the people of Ghana to fight poverty. He calls the MCC’s compact with Ghana a “smart development program” because it was designed and generated by the Ghanaian people. “We went to them. We went to the Ghanaian people and said, ‘What is it that you need to help your people lift themselves out of poverty?’”

The compact touches people’s lives in the three key areas of agriculture, transportation and rural development. First, it provides farmers with much needed training, title to their land, irrigation development, improved post-harvest handling of products and credit services, he explained. Helping farmers secure title to their land is important, he

said, because with a title in hand, farmers can go to a bank and borrow money, using their land as collateral, to improve their farming operations.

In transportation, funds are being used to turn a major unimproved road into a modern highway in Ghana so it can become a major artery for moving people and goods from the capital to a port city. The improvement of that road is going to change people’s lives, he said. “I talked to so many people and they said it is a dream come true, that since the 1960s and 1970s, they have needed this improved road ... that will connect the farmers to the capital, to the port. That helps them

*(Continued on page 4)*



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## The United States and Ghana: A Partnership of Tangible Results . . . .

*(Continued from page 3)*

get their products out. It helps in terms of food security. It helps in terms of improving trade. It is really having a great effect that is going to spill over into all core parts of the economy." Additionally, compact funds also will be used to upgrade ferry services on Lake Volta and to construct trunk roads, he said.

"People want to pay good money for good products and excellent products like they produce in Ghana," he said. But, citing pineapples as an example, he said at this point many pineapples will rot on the back of a truck or get to the capital and have to be sold the same day — further depressing prices. The MCC is not only providing agricultural expertise for the farmer, but also building roads to transport the crops for export. "We are talking about real value added. People are hungry for the sweetness of what Ghana can provide." Speaking of the compact, Sherinian said: "It is partnership; it is respectful and really driven by the Ghanaians themselves. This is not the U.S. government telling Ghana what it needs to do. It is the U.S. government helping provide Ghana what it says it needs."

A third part of the compact includes rural development, such as construction of new schools and water

facilities and support for rural banks and for public sector procurement so local governments can serve the people better. Sherinian said that during his recent trip he visited a school and was greeted by smiling students who could be proud of their modern classrooms and new desks made by Ghanaian people. "You could tell that this meant the beginning of a new future for these kids. So these schools are going to really have a huge impact on the people of these villages and the people of Ghana."

"There is a lot to look at. There is a lot to see [that shows] we are partners with that country," he said. To illustrate his point, Sherinian recalled his visit with a Ghanaian farmer named John, who through the MCC was able to get nine weeks of training on how to fertilize his crops, plant them in rows and incorporate the latest, best agricultural practices. "John said flat out, 'Look at my field. Look at what I have right here.' He was very open about it and very proud," Sherinian said. "He let me take a picture of him in the middle of his newly planted cabbage field." Additionally, Sherinian said farmers are more confident now, having received both agricultural and business training, so they can now go to the banks to borrow money to expand their operations, and, thanks to MCC, banks have been sensitized to the need for providing precious

capital to local farmers.

MCC is currently partnering with 11 countries in Africa and 17 countries worldwide for programs in excess of \$6.4 billion. Each program is uniquely designed for each country, but Sherinian said the programs usually share some qualities, like farmer training, infrastructure development, education and food security enhancement.

"When U.S. taxpayers think about how their money gets used and where it is invested," Sherinian said, "I think Africa is a great example of a lot of potential." While there is still a long way to go, he said, "we are seeing tangible results on the ground."

More information about MCC ( <http://www.mcc.gov/about/index.php> ) is available on its Web site.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*

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## World, U.S. Support Sudan Peace Efforts, U.S. Official Says

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — The international community and the United States support efforts by Sudan's North and South to complete the 2005 peace accord to ensure the peaceful transformation of Africa's largest country, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg says.

"We are facing some very important milestones in the near future. They will set the foundation, for better or for worse, over the very future of Sudan and for the region as a whole," Steinberg said at a June 23 forum for support of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended a two-decade civil war. "The stakes are enormous."

Steinberg said that the focus now is on efforts to make the process fair, open, transparent and consistent with the spirit and intent of the peace accord.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which is sometimes called the Naivasha Agreement for the place where it was signed, set a series of agreements between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the Sudanese government. It was intended to end a two-decade-old civil war between the North and the South, help establish a democratic government and provide for sharing oil revenues. It also set a timetable for Southern Sudan to hold a referendum on its independence. The current coalition government ends in 18 months with the Southern referendum.



*Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg.*

Nearly 2 million people died and another 4 million left their homes between 1983 and 2005 as a civil war raged over differences of ideology, ethnicity and religion.

"The international community and the United States supports your efforts to realize the promise of the CPA. The commitments that we made together in Naivasha, and through our presence here today, reflect a commitment of all of us to see that promise is realized," Steinberg said.

But Steinberg said that everyone recognizes, at the same time, that dealing with the problems of North-South and CPA implementation

means that all of the challenges in Sudan are interconnected.

U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan Scott Graton said there have been four days of talks between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement representatives leading up to the forum. It is the first high-level event on the peace accord since its signing in 2005, he said.

"Although much progress has been made in the past four and a half years, there's still much that remains to be done," Graton said. "With less than 19 months to go, our work is cut out for us, and we have to set a foundation for Sudan for peace, security and prosperity."

Representatives from nearly 20 nations attended the forum in Washington, which was called by Graton. President Obama appointed Graton to help encourage world interest in the peace arrangement and in completing negotiations.

What foreign affairs decisions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog. ( <http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/> )

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*

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## Obama Says U.S. Prepared for Any North Korean Threat

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — The United States is prepared if North Korea launches a long-range ballistic missile in the direction of Hawaii near the July 4 weekend, President Obama says.

"This administration, and our military, is fully prepared for any contingencies," Obama said in a CBS News interview broadcast June 22.

North Korea conducted a nuclear weapons test in May and launched a Taepondong-2 long-range ballistic missile in April. After the weapons test, the U.N. Security Council June 12 voted unanimously to impose a new set of economic, trade and security sanctions on North Korea. The Security Council also unanimously condemned the April rocket launch.

Since then, numerous sources have indicated that North Korea appears set on testing another long-range missile, an act that is prohibited by a 2006 U.N. Security Council resolution.

"I don't want to speculate on hypotheticals," the president said of North Korea's purported missile threat. "But I do want to give assurances to the American people that the t's are crossed and i's are dotted in terms of what might happen."

"What we're not going to do is to reward belligerence and provocation in the way that's been done in the past," the president said.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates said during a Pentagon press briefing June 18 that he has ordered additional precautions should North

Korea choose to launch a long-range missile toward Hawaii.

"So without telegraphing what we will do, I would just say, we are, I think we are in a good position, should it become necessary to protect American territory," Gates



*The U.S. Navy is tracking the North Korean cargo ship Kang Nam (shown here in a 2006 photo), which may be carrying illicit weapons.*

said.

North Korea's Taepondong-2 missile reportedly has a maximum range of 6,700 kilometers, enough to reach Hawaii, Alaska and most of East Asia. However, the April launch failed soon after liftoff and plunged into the Pacific Ocean, similar to a 2006 launch that failed on liftoff.

Noting that South Korea, Japan and the Security Council, which includes Russia, China, the United States, France and the United Kingdom, unanimously agreed June 12 on the additional sanctions after concluding that North Korea has violated international law, Obama said, "I think the international community here has spoken."

"One of the things that we have been very clear about is that North Korea has a path toward rejoining the international community, and we hope they take that path," Obama said.

Defense Under Secretary Michele Flournoy is scheduled to meet with Chinese defense officials in Beijing June 23–24 for the U.S.-China Defense Consultative Talks. The issue of North Korea and its missile tests is expected to be a significant part of the talks. Flournoy is expected to travel on to Seoul for further talks with South Korean officials. China, the United States, South Korea, Japan and Russia have been conducting multilateral discussions with North Korea — known as the Six-Party Talks — to convince the regime of Kim Jong-il to abandon its nuclear weapons ambitions.

And the U.S. Navy is tracking the whereabouts of the 2,000-ton North Korean-flagged, cargo ship Kang Nam after it left Nampo, a port near the North Korean capital Pyongyang on June 17. Admiral Mike Mullen, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, said in a Pentagon press briefing June 18 that the United States would enforce the terms of the latest U.N. Security Council resolution (1874), which is designed to stop North Korea from exporting nuclear weapons, weapons' materials or missiles and missile parts.

That resolution includes provisions for interdicting ships suspected of carrying such prohibited cargo.

The transcript of the June 18 briefing with Gates and Mullen ( <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/June/20090622085357eaifas0.20068.html> ) is available on America.gov.

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## U.S. Appalled and Outraged by Violence Against Iranian Protesters

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — President Obama says Iranian government actions against peaceful demonstrators since the country's June 12 presidential election have been "unjust," and images of silent demonstrations and the risks being taken by Iranian protesters show a "timeless dignity."

Speaking in a press conference at the White House June 23, Obama said the United States and the international community have been "appalled and outraged by the threats, the beatings and imprisonments of the last few days."

"I strongly condemn these unjust actions, and I join with the American people in mourning each and every innocent life that is lost," he said.

The United States continues to respect Iran's sovereignty and "is not interfering with Iran's affairs," Obama said, adding that accusations to the contrary are "an obvious attempt to distract people from what is truly taking place within Iran's borders."

The Iranian people are trying to debate their own future and "can speak for themselves," he said. "This is not about the United States or the West; this is about the people of Iran, and the future that they, and only they, will choose."

At the same time, the president

said, people all over the world are witnessing "the courage and the dignity of the Iranian people," and "a remarkable opening within Iranian society." The suppression of ideas never can make them go away, Obama said, echoing his June 4 speech to Muslims around



*President Barack Obama gestures as he takes a question during a news conference at the White House in Washington, Tuesday, June 23, 2009. (AP Photo/Ron Edmonds)*

the world. Iran's rulers must govern through consent rather than coercion, and the Iranian people will be the ultimate judge of their government's actions, he said.

"We've seen the timeless dignity of tens of thousands [of] Iranians marching in silence. We've seen people of all ages risk everything to insist that their votes are counted and that their voices [are] heard. Above all, we've seen courageous women stand up to brutality and threats, and we've experienced the searing image of a woman bleeding to death on the streets. While this loss is raw and extraordinarily painful, we also know this: Those who stand up for justice are always on the right side of history," Obama

said.

In his remarks, the president took a question from an Iranian citizen that was relayed by Nico Pitney, a writer for the Huffington Post Web site. The questioner asked Obama under what circumstances he would accept incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's re-election, which has sparked the demonstrations.

Obama said the United States cannot definitively say what took place in the June 12 election, citing the absence of international election observers on the ground. However, he said there are "significant questions" that many Iranians have raised about the legitimacy of the election. (See "Iran Must Respect the Right of Its People to Peaceful Expression" ([http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/](http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/June/20090615151700esnamfuak0.7573053.html)

<http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/June/20090615151700esnamfuak0.7573053.html> ).")

"The most important thing for the Iranian government to consider is legitimacy in the eyes of its own people, not in the eyes of the United States," he said.

But there are international norms and principles on how to deal with peaceful dissent, which "spans cultures [and] spans borders."

Americans have seen "powerful images and poignant words" thanks to Internet and cell phone technology, and "what we've been seeing in news reports violates those norms and violates those principles"

*(Continued on page 13)*



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## First Trial of Guantanamo Detainee Ends with Conviction

**Washington** -- Al-Qaida member Salim Hamdan was sentenced to five and a half years in prison after a military commission found him guilty August 6 on five of eight charges of providing material support to terrorism. The court proceeding at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, was the first U.S. war crimes trial since World War II.

White House deputy spokesman Tony Fratto said August 6 that Hamdan had "received a fair trial," after U.S. authorities presented their case against him, and that the government "bore the burden of proving his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt."

In his statement, Fratto said Hamdan had been presumed innocent until he was found guilty and described the military commission system as "a fair and appropriate legal process for prosecuting detainees alleged to have committed crimes against the United States or our interests," adding, "We look forward to other cases moving forward to trial."

According to an August 6 statement by the Defense Department, along with being cleared on three of the eight counts of providing material support for terrorism, Hamdan also was found not guilty on the charge of conspiracy to commit terrorism.

Hamdan faced a maximum sentence of life in prison, the Defense Department said. However, his jury of six U.S. military officers sentenced him to five and a half years on Au-

gust 7. Media reports indicated that, with time already served, he could be eligible for release in five months, but still could remain at Guantanamo Bay as an "enemy combatant."

The Defense Department statement

set of legal problems. The United States, drawing on both domestic and international military law, has used the military commission process to protect the rights of the accused and afford them fair trials.



*White House deputy spokesman Tony Fratto*

said Hamdan's case next will be reviewed by the military court's Convening Authority to evaluate the "legal sufficiency" of the court's findings and to review the appropriateness of the sentence.

"Hamdan will still be represented by counsel and have the opportunity to submit matters for consideration on his behalf. Then his case will receive an automatic review by the Court of Military Commission Review. Thereafter, he could appeal to the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia and the Supreme Court," the Defense Department said.

The capture of a large number of nonuniformed combatants who were engaged in armed hostilities and terrorism in Afghanistan and other countries has posed a thorny

On June 12, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the right of those detained at Guantanamo to challenge their detention in U.S. courts.

According to the Defense Department, military commissions are "constituted courts, affording all the necessary judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples for purposes of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conven-

tion."

The full text of the Defense Department statement ( <http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=12118> ) is available on the department's Web site.

For more information, the Defense Department's Military Commission Web site also has the list of charges ( [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/May2007/Hamdan\\_Charges.pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/May2007/Hamdan_Charges.pdf) ) that were brought against Hamdan.

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## New York City Festival Showcases Muslim Art and Ideas

**By Ahmed Mohamed**  
**Staff Writer**

**Washington** — A festival in New York City celebrating the extraordinary range of artistic expression in the Muslim world featured more than 100 artists from as far away as Asia, Africa and the Middle East and as near as the New York City borough of Brooklyn.

The festival, titled “Muslim Voices: Arts & Ideas,” was held June 5–14 at various locations throughout New York City. The events were sponsored by the Asia Society, the Brooklyn Academy of Music and New York University’s Center for Dialogues.

The festival featured music, theater, films, exhibitions, talks and other events, which ranged from traditional calligraphy, storytelling and Sufi devotional music to contemporary video installations and Arabic hip-hop music. The popularity of this festival is viewed as a reflection of the interest that Americans have in religious and cultural diversity.

Festival presentations and programs offered multiple perspectives from Muslims from around the globe, and took place at various locations, such as the Austrian Cultural Forum in New York, the Brooklyn Museum, the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the New York Public Library.

During the festival, the Center for Dialogues sponsored a two-day conference entitled “Bridging the Divide between the United States and the Muslim World through Arts and Ideas: possibilities and limita-

tions.” This academic, cultural and policy conference brought together approximately 50 artists, producers, religious and community leaders, scholars and policymakers from the Muslim world, the United States and Europe.



*Above) Singer Youssou N'Dour performs during the Muslim Voices: Arts & Ideas festival in New York. Pictures: Reuters*

Participants discussed three broad themes: “The World of the Artist,” which examined the place of artists in the Muslim world and their access to audiences and venues; “Art and Social Commentary,” which considered art’s power to transform as well as to critique; and “Cultural Exchange,” which investigated how to harness cultural capital through cultural exchanges and suggested new arenas for U.S. cultural diplomacy toward the Muslim world.

The conference blended performance, panel presentations and group discussions to spark conversations about how the rich expressive arts of Muslim cultures might reinvigorate relations with the Muslim world.

The Brooklyn Academy of Music neighborhood was transformed into a vibrant souk, or open-air market, featuring food, arts and crafts from diverse Muslim cultures. The market also included craft demonstrations,

hands-on workshops, exhibits and outdoor performances by local Muslim artists and artisans.

The Senegalese artist and humanitarian Youssou N’Dour also performed songs with his band that drew on his Islamic beliefs, African heritage and global experience. During the performance, 2,000 people were on their feet, waving their hands and moving to the music. “The music brings them, and then you can deliver your message,” N’Dour said.

Both the Aissawa Ensemble and the Al Taybah Ensemble presented their vibrant musical traditions based on the mystical branch of Islam, Sufism. Sufi music seeks to unite listeners with states of transcendence to connect with the Divine.

The festival not only exposed new audiences to examples of contemporary Muslim creative culture, but beyond that, it also reaffirmed the value of artistic exchange as a means of building intercultural bridges. The festival attracted more than 10,000 people.

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## Giving to Charity Remains at High Level in United States

By Jeffrey Thomas  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — Each year, the Giving USA Foundation publishes a report on charitable giving researched and written by the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University. Some experts expected a critical decline in giving in 2008, noting the struggling economy. However, while charitable giving declined 5.7 percent in 2008 after adjustment for inflation, it remained almost as high as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) as the previous year (2.2 percent in 2008 versus 2.3 percent in 2007), according to the report.

"With the United States mired in a recession throughout 2008, there was no doubt in anyone's mind that charitable giving would be down," said Del Martin, chair of Giving USA Foundation. "However, what we find remarkable is that individuals, corporations and foundations still provided more than \$307 billion to causes they support, despite the economic conditions."

These charities support a wide variety of organizations and groups working to improve education, help animals, protect the environment, or provide help for the needy both in the United States and internationally. (See "American Foundations Pledge Continued International Giving" (<http://www.america.gov/st/foraid-english/2008/December/20081219145525AKllennoCcM0.7043268.html>)).

### INCREASE IN GIVING TO RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS, UNIVERSITIES

According to the report, giving to religious congregations and organizations — about one-half of all individual giving — actually increased 1.6 percent after adjusting for inflation.

U.S. religious organizations are an important source of development aid and disaster relief in the developing world, providing more than 1.5 times more aid (\$36.9 billion in 2007) than the U.S. government,



*The Gates Foundation has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in grants to help African farmers grow their way out of poverty.*

according to the Hudson Institute's Center for Global Prosperity (CGP), a Washington research organization. (See "A New Assistance Landscape" (<http://www.america.gov/st/foraid-english/2008/June/20080608152805xjyrreP0.2548181.html>)).

In Zimbabwe and Zambia, for example, the charity Forgotten Voices helps local communities care for AIDS orphans, while Engineering Ministries International provides volunteer designers, engineers and architects to work on infrastructure projects around the world.

When it comes to international aid, Americans long have preferred to donate their money through the private sector or to private charities

rather than relying on government. The \$115.9 billion provided by private foundations, corporations, voluntary organizations, universities, religious organizations and individual Americans in 2007, the most current data available, is more than five times the \$21.8 billion of official aid provided by the U.S. government, according to CGP.

Private gifts to U.S. colleges and universities climbed in 2008 to \$31.6 billion, the highest total ever recorded, according to a report released in March by the Council for Aid in Education. According to the CGP report, Americans also gave \$3.9 billion in support to students from the developing world who studied in the United States in the 2007–2008 academic year, a 5 percent increase over the 2006–2007 level.

### DECREASES IN SOME AREAS OF GIVING

Giving fell to foundations and organizations that focus on education, health, the environment, animals, the arts, culture and humanities, according to the report. Individual giving, which is always the largest component of charitable contributions, was an estimated \$229.28 billion, or 75 percent of the total, in 2008. This is a decrease of 6.3 percent adjusted for inflation compared with 2007 estimates.

The percentage of Americans who told the Gallup polling organization they have donated to charity over the past 12 months (84 percent) in December 2008 was slightly higher than during the stronger economy

*(Continued on page 15)*

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## Sacrifices of Prisoners of Conscience Should Not Be in Vain

By Jane Morse  
Staff Writer

**Washington** -- The sacrifices of those who have been jailed in Syria for their beliefs must not be made in vain nor forgotten, says Ausama Monajed, who was himself a prisoner of conscience.

Monajed spoke of his experiences and those of his compatriots in Syrian jails during a special panel discussion hosted July 24 by the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York.

The other panelists, who represented Belarus, Burma, Cuba, Eritrea and Uzbekistan, were all former prisoners of conscience or family members of people imprisoned for peacefully expressing their internationally recognized human rights. They spoke to a room packed with more than 120 diplomats, journalists and representatives of nongovernmental organizations. (See "World Community Renews Call to Free Prisoners of Conscience" (<http://www.america.gov/st/hr-english/2008/July/20080730104553ajesrom0.1260187.html?CP.rss=true> ).")

Although they have received very little publicity, there are many prisoners of conscience in Syria, according to Monajed.

"They are not terrorists, or extremists, or rabble-rousers or foreign agents," he said. "They are like you here in this room: decent people who believe in the same things as you believe in -- freedom of expression, the right to elect one's government, a just and independent judiciary, and equality before the law. They are conscientious individuals fighting for their human, political and social rights in Syria. They want to restore pride in Syria

and in themselves as Syrians."

He shared the names and told the stories of the many doctors, businessmen, poets and artists who endure torture and detention under what Monajed called "a sadistic regime."

"The United Nations," he said, "as representing the will of the international community, bears a responsibility to these prisoners that they shall not be forgotten, and that the regime which imprisons them shall not be allowed to continue in its repressive practices unchecked."

The panel discussion aimed to underscore the Declaration on Prisoners of Conscience issued in June. That declaration, co-sponsored by the United States and 63 U.N. member states, calls for a global commitment to releasing prisoners being detained solely because of the peaceful expression of their beliefs.

The declaration seeks to reinforce commitments made by nations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1948. Among its 30 articles, the Universal Declaration recognizes that all people have the right to freedom of thought and freedom from unlawful detention.

### FIGHTING FOR REFORM IN SYRIA

Monajed has been persecuted, interrogated and detained several times because of his activities as a university student in Syria.

During his last detention by political security forces in Damascus in 2004, he was interrogated and tortured for a week. He was arrested while doing interviews and taking

photos in rural and poor areas in Syria. His goal had been to highlight the plight of poor people in these areas by telling their stories in regional and international media.

It was only after Monajed signed an oath promising not to be involved in any further political or social activities that he was released.

Now Monajed refuses to be silenced. Fortunate enough to have survived his prison experience, he said he feels it is his "duty to tell the whole world what is happening to those who are still in prison, and who have chosen to make a stand knowing full well the price that they will have to pay."

Today Monajed, a frequent commentator on Syrian politics, serves on the National Council of the Damascus Declaration, an umbrella group of leading Syrian opposition parties, prominent figures, intellectuals and reformers.

He is the director of public relations for the Movement for Justice and Development, which leads the struggle for peaceful and democratic change in Syria and the creation of a modern state that respects human rights and promotes economic and social development.

"Regimes which stunt the growth of democracy and civil society and continue to respond to their people's legitimate calls for change with harsh repression should not be welcomed but shunned," Monajed said.

"Prisoners of conscience should be recognized as such by the international community and should be afforded support and encouragement," he said. ♦



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# Scientists Say Climate Change Could Harm Health

By Yasmine Alotaibi  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — Climate change is happening faster than anticipated and is starting to negatively impact health, two scientists say.

Amanda Staudt, a climate scientist with the National Wildlife Federation, and Dr. Paul Epstein, associate director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School as well as a medical doctor trained in tropical public health, came together to discuss the situation at a Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars event, "Healthy Solutions to Climate Change."

Staudt said there is mounting scientific evidence that "climate change is happening faster than what we had anticipated even a few years ago." According to Staudt, these unanticipated changes are already affecting the lives of people around the world.

"There's an increasing awareness that these changes are going to be irreversible and ... that we're already being impacted," she said. "In particular, the increasing severity of weather and climate extremes, drought, floods, rainfall, hurricanes and wildfires are all ways that I think we're experiencing global warming in our day-to-day life."

## CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTING HEALTH

As these changes in climate occur, Epstein said, health risks will worsen. For example, the rapidly changing climate will help spread infectious diseases.

"The first signal we have in terms of infectious disease is in the mountains of Africa, Asia and Latin America," he said. "What we're seeing is the glaciers are retreating, plant communities are upwardly



*Climate change is affecting daily life in the form of severe weather and droughts, a scientist says*

migrating and mosquitoes ... are circulating at higher altitudes."

As the mosquitoes move upward, so do the diseases they are carrying. Epstein said this results in higher rates of malaria and yellow fever as the mosquitoes cover more territory.

On June 16, the U.S. government released Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States, a comprehensive report that detailed how climate change affects Americans. According to the report, the same weather conditions that lead to heat waves also increase ground-level ozone. Ozone decreases short-term lung function and can cause permanent cell damage in the lining of the lungs.

The report predicts that the number of extreme heat waves will increase, resulting in more heat-related deaths and illnesses. Because the severity of weather extremes is increasing, heavy rains

and floods are also posing a health risk. Heavy rains often lead to flooding, which increases the incidence of water-borne diseases. (See "U.S. Regions Experiencing Climate Change Effects Now, Report Says" (<http://www.america.gov/st/energy-english/2009/June/20090617143115lcniirellep0.6481745.html>)).

## HEALTHY SOLUTIONS AND STABILIZATION

Epstein said the world must focus on healthy solutions. He said a variety of solutions must be combined to create a portfolio of options, with each lessening the damaging effects of climate change. These options range from adopting renewable energy, like wind and geothermal power, to better managing forest resources.

Many of these solutions offer "no regrets" ways to stabilize global warming, which Epstein said are "really good and offer lots of promise." He said these no-regrets options can safely be used immediately. Other options, such as the use of biofuels and fossil-fuel-based energies, require further study before implementation in order to fully assess the potential health, ecological and economic consequences, he said.

## RETHINKING CLIMATE CHANGE

Staudt said irreversible changes have forced environmental conservationists to rethink their strategy in fighting climate change.

"The conservation community right

*(Continued on page 13)*

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## **U.S. Appalled and Outraged by Violence Against Iranian Protesters . . . .**

*(Continued from page 7)*

of the right to free speech and free expression.

"I think it is not too late for the Iranian government to recognize that there is a peaceful path that will lead to stability and legitimacy and prosperity for the Iranian people. We hope they take it," Obama said.

The United States is waiting to see how the situation plays out inside Iran before deciding how to proceed with its long-standing concerns over Iran's nuclear program and support for terrorist organizations.

"There is a path available to Iran in which their sovereignty is respected, their traditions, their culture, their faith is respected, but one in which they are part of a larger community that has responsibilities and operates according to norms and international rules that are universal," he said. "We don't know how they're going to respond yet, and that's what we're waiting to see."

The president said the Iranian government's recent actions toward its people have not been encouraging "in terms of the path that this regime may choose to take."

Iranian leaders need to understand that "how they handle the dissent within their own country generated indigenously, internally from the Iranian people, will help shape the tone not only for Iran's future but also its relationship to other countries," he said.

### **U.N. SECRETARY-GENERAL "DISMAYED" BY USE OF FORCE AGAINST CIVILIANS**

A spokesman for U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the U.N. leader is "dismayed" by the post-election violence in Iran, "particularly the use of force against civilians," and he urged an "immediate stop to the arrests, threats and use of force."

In a statement released June 22, Ban urged Iranian authorities to respect the fundamental civil and po-

litical rights of the Iranian people, "especially the freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of information."

The U.N. leader also urged the government and opposition to resolve their differences peacefully through dialogue and legal avenues. "The Secretary-General reiterates his hope that the democratic will of the people of Iran will be fully respected," the statement said.

What foreign affairs decisions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog ( <http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/> ).

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*

## **Scientists Say Climate Change Could Harm Health . . . .**

*(Continued from page 12)*

now is actively wrestling with how global warming will affect their mission," she said. "For many years, perhaps the whole history of conservation, the emphasis has been on returning our land to some pristine state. That's just not a reality anymore. We're now dealing with completely new climate conditions. So, now we have to think in the conservation community about how we change everything we do to

make sense in a changing climate."

Staudt said she thinks that although the situation is critical, the world has the opportunity to move forward.

"I just think this is a really historic opportunity," she said.

"Everything's been coming together. We have increasing, surging awareness of the urgency, so we know we need to reduce global warming pollution. At the same

time we have this opportunity to repower America, advance a clean-energy economy, and also protect wildlife for our children's future. That's really why I'm in this game at all. I just think it's so important that we be taking action now to provide a better world for our children."

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*

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# Insurance Tool Helps Farmers, Nations Manage Climate Change Risk

By Cheryl Pellerin  
Science Writer

**Washington** — Extreme weather takes a toll on farmers everywhere. In developed countries, farmers can buy crop insurance to help manage that risk. Not long ago, poor farmers in developing nations, where crop insurance is rarely available, had no alternative but to shoulder their own risk, in the process often becoming mired in poverty.

Today, a relatively new tool called index insurance may give these farmers and other vulnerable people around the world an affordable way to manage the effects of a variable and changing climate on their livelihoods now and in the future.

The farmers' resulting economic stability may make creditors more willing to extend credit, suddenly allowing them to invest in new seeds, fertilizer and equipment — their own agricultural productivity — and begin to climb permanently, harvest by harvest, out of developing-world poverty traps.

"Index insurance has been really promising in a couple dozen places throughout the world," Molly Hellmuth, director of the Climate and Society Publication Secretariat, part of the International Research Institute (IRI) for Climate and Society, located in New York, told *America.gov*.

## MEASURING RAINFALL

In traditional crop insurance, a farmer pays money, called a premium, to an insurance company to protect against a crop loss. If something happens to the crop, the farmer files a claim and the company sends an insurance adjuster to

the farm to assess the loss and determine how much the insurance company will pay the farmer.

Insurance cheating can be a problem — what's known as a moral hazard — because being paid for a crop loss can weaken a farmer's incentive to produce a good crop. This hazard and the need for insurance adjusters to visit farms for each claim tend to make insurance premiums expensive.



*Index insurance has potential to help people like these men in Adi Ha, Ethiopia, escape from poverty*

"That's a problem all over the world," Daniel Osgood, associate research scientist in economic modeling and climate at IRI, told *America.gov*.

With index insurance, a farmer pays a very small premium to protect against, for example, drought-related crop loss — the most common application in developing countries so far. Rather than being linked to a crop loss, the payout is linked to a weather index, in this case rainfall.

## WEATHER INDEX

To determine the payout, the insurance company measures rainfall using data from rain gauges near the farmer's field. If the data from the rain gauge show the rainfall

amount is below a certain stated level, the insurance company pays the farmers.

"We're saying, instead of giving people insurance on their losses, let's give them a payout when something happens that would cause their crops to die," Osgood said. "Its advantage is, if I know the rainfall [level] there's no way people can cheat to get a payout. That makes it much simpler and [insurance adjusters] don't have to go see if people's crops have died."

Payouts can be made quickly, saving farmers from desperately selling their planting equipment for money or using their plow animals for food — actions that would affect their ability to farm and drive them deeper into poverty.

The new insurance tool also has disadvantages, Osgood said. One is that index insurance is new and it takes time and resources to explain to farmers how it works. Another is called "basis risk," when insurance payouts do not match actual losses.

"If my farm is far from the rain gauge and the rain gauge faces a drought and I don't, or if I face a drought and the rain gauge doesn't, then I'm not covered," he said. "There will be payouts I don't need because the formula won't be perfect. And I have to pay for that in my premium because the money I get out of insurance is a pay-in on my premium."

## CLIMATE AND SOCIETY

Hellmuth is chief editor of an upcoming report on the topic, part of a series on climate-related issues,

*(Continued on page 15)*



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Telling America's story

**Giving to Charity Remains at High Level in United States . . .**

*(Continued from page 10)*

of 2004, when 82 percent identified themselves as givers.

The Giving USA report does not take into account the value of contributions Americans make in terms of time and labor. More than 60 million Americans volunteer for charitable and national service organizations.

Americans contributed an estimated \$3.5 billion worth of volunteer time in 2007 for relief and development assistance causes outside the United States and for international assistance organizations in the United States, CGP estimated.

CGP also said more than 1 million Americans travelled abroad in 2007 to volunteer, and an additional 341,000 volunteers contributed to

international assistance causes in the United States.

The complete Giving USA will be available in early July 2009 from the Web site of the Giving USA Foundation.

The Index of Global Philanthropy and Remittances 2009 ( [http://www.hudson.org/files/documents/Index of Global Philanthropy and Remittances 2009.pdf](http://www.hudson.org/files/documents/Index%20of%20Global%20Philanthropy%20and%20Remittances%202009.pdf) ) is available on the Web site of the Hudson Institute.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

**Insurance Tool Helps Farmers, Nations Manage Climate Change Risk . . .**

*(Continued from page 14)*

called Index Insurance and Climate Risk: Prospects for Development and Disaster Management. The publication will be available June 24 after its launch at the 2009 Global Humanitarian Forum in Geneva.

IRI, established in 1996 as a cooperative agreement between the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Columbia University, will publish the report in partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development, Oxfam America, Swiss Re, NOAA, the U.N. Development Programme and the World Food Programme. (See "U.S. Institute Helps Developing Nations Put Climate Data to Use ( [http://www.america.gov/st/env-](http://www.america.gov/st/env-english/2009/March/20090313114740lcniirellep0.8691065.html)

[english/2009/March/20090313114740lcniirellep0.8691065.html](http://www.america.gov/st/env-english/2009/March/20090313114740lcniirellep0.8691065.html) ).")

The series' inaugural publication, Climate Risk Management in Africa: Learning from Practice, was a partnership among IRI, the African Union, the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa, the Africa Development Bank and the Global Climate Observing System. It was supported by the U.K. Department for International Development and NOAA in response to a focus on climate and sustainable development in Africa at the 2005 Group of Eight (G8) summit meeting.

"Index insurance is a pretty expert-intensive process right now," Hellmuth said, "so we wanted to capture some of the cases and give information on how they were suc-

cessful or not successful. And because we're a more technical institution, we wanted to show some of the ways that climate science and technology are being used in practical applications."

More information about IRI ( <http://portal.iri.columbia.edu/portal/server.pt> ) is available at the institute's Web site.

IRI Climate and Society Publications ( [http://portal.iri.columbia.edu/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=219&parentname=CommunityPage&parentid=8&mode=2&in\\_hi\\_userid=2&cached=true](http://portal.iri.columbia.edu/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=219&parentname=CommunityPage&parentid=8&mode=2&in_hi_userid=2&cached=true) ) are available at the Institute's Web site. Index Insurance and Climate Risk: Prospects for Development and Disaster Man-